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ABSTRACT

This bulletin is the first of three designed to give detailed help on fostering language competence in 4- to 6-year-old school children. The bulletin introduces the teacher to a group of prepositions and conjunctions (chosen from the Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary List of 220 Words) which are important to the meaning of sentences. The list was compiled from those words occurring most frequently in ordinary written communication. The words occur with high frequency in primers and first grade materials. Three-fourths of the document is devoted to describing the potential function of these conjunctions and prepositions in the language, and making suggestions to the teacher and the reader, alerting them to the primary position of such words in language learning. (Author/JF)

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LANGUAGE TEACHING:
PREPOSITIONS AND CONJUNCTIVES

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The Arizona Center for Early Childhood Education is administered through the University of Arizona's College of Education, F. Robert Paulsen, Dean. It is an interdisciplinary organization and is directed by Marie M. Hughes. Ronald Henderson, Department of Educational Psychology, is an associate member of the directorate.

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INTRODUCTION

The Tucson Early Education Program has as one of the four goal areas language competence. It is inevitable at this period in time that any school program for two-year-olds through graduate school will deliberately concern itself with this goal. Language, the most distinguishing characteristic of man, is viewed today in its relationships to the totality of human affairs and in its contribution to the functioning of higher mental processes. This bulletin is the first of three designed to give detailed help on the fostering of language competence.

Language competence grows and develops in situations in which it is actually used, thus related to thought and individual association as well as to the activity. Malinowski has defined language as "a system of sounds that accompanies experience." With the young four to six-year-old beginning school children, we mediate each activity and event with language. The young mother talks to her child as she bathes him: "Give me your arm." "Now I'll wash your hand." "I'll wash your foot." "I'll rub your back." "Now I'll put the powder on." Children with little experience with English or those limited in language require this kind of running commentary to accompany their activities. Soon they will begin to imitate the adult model. This modeling of the language becomes a major guideline in the teacher's professional response.

If the teacher is to help the children gain increased control over language, she must understand more about the process of language acquisition and the structure of language itself. As increased understanding of language acquisition is acquired, the teacher comes to realize the importance of herself as a language model. This modeling, to be effective, must take place in a situation with the attention of the child focused on something in which he is genuinely involved. Then the words begin to have meaning and he is more likely to find the opportunity to repeat them for himself. Such attention, accompanied by hearing the words and sentences with accuracy, takes place best in a one to one relationship

with a child or in activities with a very small group of children.

The learning of the language of his culture is a remarkable intellectual feat of all children everywhere. Young children learn the order of words in a sentence as well as the names for objects and actions. For example, a child from an English-speaking home will always place the adjective before the noun. Normal children of any language living anywhere on this earth accomplish this feat of ordering the syntactical elements of the language by the time they are four or four and a half. However, there continues to be much for them to learn and the children must have increased practice in communicating their ideas and reacting to the ideas of others. The added learning necessary to the control of language pertains to the increase in the complexity of sentence structure as a necessary accompaniment to more complex ideas with their multiple interrelationships. Such complex sentences are modeled by the teacher as they become appropriate. To provide a model that "lifts" the language of children in variety and complexity of structure, the teacher herself needs to become linguistically sophisticated.

The present bulletin introduces the teacher to a list of important prepositions and conjunctions that have much to do with the meaning of sentences. They are inconspicuous words, often not heard by children. Curiously enough the "littleness" of the little words combined with the meaning of the high content words is cue enough for efficient guessing by smart guessers. This does not suggest that the "little" word is not significant to the thought. In fact, it is more often than not crucial to the thought and to the precision of thought. Certainly, the reconsideration of the old platitude about "if" being a very little word with a very big meaning might well prompt thoughtful teachers to increase their concern for language teaching.

The prepositions and conjunctives, both within the "little word" class are syntactical signaling devices. There is an obligation, when using such words, for the speaker to follow the little words with a given kind of word structure.

One may say one of the following:

Throw it at _____.

Throw it to _____.

Throw it in _____.

Throw it beyond _____.

Throw it near _____.

Any one of us are immediately compelled to fill the slot. The slot is necessarily filled by a noun, pronoun, or noun cluster. Similarly, the conjunctives when used as such and not as other parts of speech such as simple adverbs or as interrogatives, clearly obligate the speaker to follow with a specific structure, for example:

John and (nominal) did it.

John or (nominal) can go.

I'll wear my red dress or (adjective).

She played happily but (adverb).

Nobody went but (nominal).

I'll go when (clause).

The girl who (clause) is my friend.

I went because (clause).

Not only do these words signal the language that follows, but they specify the nature of the relationship between preceding and succeeding language. Such relationships are basic to decision making and problem solving.

We have chosen the Dolch list of 220 words as the source of the conjunctives and prepositions discussed. This list was compiled from those words occurring most frequently in the running words of ordinary written communications (65 to 80%). As might be expected, they are words of high frequency in the primers and first grade materials. In general, the list excludes nouns since they are specific to situations.

Conjunctives and prepositions are relational words. They have existed within the language from the time of its origin. Because of their changelessness and their relative stability, they are known as the closed class words. The importance of these words to meaning and thought suggests need for the child's acquisition of control over them in speaking, reading, and writing. Mrs. Arline Hobson presents an exposition of

the function of these words in language and makes suggestions that will be helpful to teachers--at least it will alert the readers to the primary position of such words in language learning.

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The Potential of Prepositional Usage
in the Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary List
of 220 Words

The preposition is defined by Dolch⁵ as a service word as distinguished from the content words.

Today's grammarians also classify the preposition as functors, a classification shared with prefixes, suffixes, auxiliary verbs, articles, and conjunctions. The functors are defined by Ursula Bellugi¹ as being more obvious for their function than for their semantic content.

The preposition cannot be understood by pointing to anything. It has no concrete referent. It can be understood only by someone verbally mediating a situation in which its function can be obviously demonstrated. "Oh" cannot be pointed to as can "boy", "hat", and "head", but a boy can demonstrate putting his hat on his head. Even further removed from referents are such prepositions like "of" and "with." They can be understood only in interaction situations in which a modeler of the language literally puts them to work to code an actual experience. As one classroom aide said, "We need to talk with more 'withes'."

The prepositions, though difficult to define lexically, being without concrete referents, are a very limited group of words that, historically, have undergone minimal change in the language with respect to morphology (form) or to meaning. They are in the closed form class, and the speaker has no latitude to "coin" new prepositions in the way he can "coin" or make up new nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs of the open form class.

The service of the preposition is relational and connective, a function of associating nominals (both nouns and pronouns) to other open class words. For example,

a) relating the nominal to another nominal

1. The boy with red hair.
2. The girl with him.
3. The girl with a ribbon on her head.

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b) relating the nominal to a verbal

1. Running to the store, he became very hot.
2. She ate at the table.
3. I gave it to her.

c) relating the nominal to an adjective

1. It was green like the trees.
2. The child was furious with anger.

Although the prepositions are so restricted in number and in meaning, they are often used non-literally, idiomatically, and/or figuratively.

Teachers have known children to protest that you do not travel by train, you travel in a train. You do not go by boat, you go in a boat. Again, it should be reiterated that logical deduction is not helpful in learning what is the appropriate preposition. Prepositional control must be acquired in a talking situation that demands the use of specific prepositions which may defy literal meaning.

The frequency of prepositions in figurative expressions frustrate any effort to learn the meaning of prepositions through awareness of semantic content. Again, the richness of our language with all its humor and analogy can be grasped and learned only in context. For example, "She's up in the air" or "He's in the dumps" also defy logical and literal definition.

The prepositions are frequently drawn into the verb and their specific functions are highly colored by obligatory semantic relationships. For example, the traditionalist would say that the following sentence consists of subject (I) + the verb (thought) + the prepositional phrase (about the idea): "I thought about the idea." Today we are more realistic about content and meaning and would say that the sentence is subject (I) + verb (thought about) + noun object (the idea).

I / thought about / the idea.

The high frequency of prepositions used non-literally and idiomatically means that many prepositions can be understood only as sequitors or the natural "follow-up" of preceding constructions, and therefore can be understood only in context and in situation. For example, you can be sorry for somebody, but you are jealous of someone, and pleased with another. Obviously multiple experiences pertaining to feelings about

people are necessary for a child to have sufficient practice with the set of "verb + preposition + nominal" in order to be sufficiently sensitive to the range of semantic differentiations in order to use the prepositions comfortably. Their usage and semantic variations defy logical explanation and they must be put to practical use by the child long before he exhibits much linguistic self-consciousness.

Nominals, whether they have concrete referents thus labeling objects or whether they are at the more abstract level of labeling sentiments, virtues, or characteristics, are very frequently related to the rest of the sentence through the prepositions. The areas of the relatedness are usually concerned with:

1. Place and Position
2. Direction and Motion
3. Time
4. Manner, Agent, or Instrument
5. Measurement, Number, or Amount

We recognize that there is a sixth category of miscellaneous prepositions that are not so easily categorized like "without", "in spite of", "concerning", "despite", etc.

The English language also combines adverb and preposition sometimes so intimately that the compound form truly constitutes a preposition. For example, "out of" and the substandard "off of."

The bird fell out of the nest.

The boy fell off of the swing. (substandard)

Although "off of" is substandard it must be realistically recognized as common and as a form frequently used even by educated people.

John B. Carroll² views the preposition as a means of relating the nominals spatially, temporarily, or logically to the rest of the sentence (to another nominal or to a verbal). It might be helpful to consider some possible models of such relatedness that a child might hear an adult use, drawing prepositions from this Dolch list of 220 words.

A. Spatial

The house is around the corner.
 in the city.
 on the street.
 by the store.
 out of the city.

This bird flew off the wall.
 into the tree.
 through the branches.
 over the house.
 out of sight.
 along the river.

B. Temporary

We'll eat after recess.
 around noon.
 at 12 o'clock.
 in time.
 on time.
 before leaving.

C. Logical

We traveled by bus.
 in a bus.
 with a friend.
 with difficulty.

The baby is a brother of mine.
 a brother with red hair.

Consideration by a teacher of the possible use of each preposition on the attached chart could prompt the teacher to model the preposition with more intellectual meaning.

Examples of Prepositional Usage According to the
Areas of Relatedness Defined by the English Language Series

I. Place and Position

The children are about the house.
 The children at the door.
 Many people are standing around the building
 The dog stood before the man.
 The dog stood by the man.
 The kitten is in the house.
 The bird is off the perch.
 The bird is on her perch.
 The mother is out of the house.
 The picture is over the chair.
 The paper is under the book.
 The book is up there.
 He sat upon the chair.

II. Direction and Motion

The kitten ran about the house.
 The child ran after his father.
 The cat ran around the room.

The bird flew at the window.
 The baby fell down the stairs.
 The cat ran from the dog.
 The boy went in the house. (Substandard)
 The girl put her socks into the drawer.
 The water ran off the roof.
 The boy fell off of the swing. (Substandard)
 The smoke came out of the chimney.
 The smoke blew over the tree tops.
 The father went to the door.
 The water ran under the bushes.
 The baby crawled up the stairs.

III. Time

Let's eat about noon.
 You can nap after lunch.
 I'm sleepy at night.
 I can go around noon. (Substandard)
 I get sleepy before my bed time.
 I go to sleep by 9 o'clock.
 I nap from 2 o'clock to 3 o'clock.
 I can go in an hour.
 I'll be ready in about an hour.
 It rained and thundered into the night.
 We are off our schedule.
 I can finish the picture over the weekend.
 It snowed from morning to night.
 I can't be ready under an hour.

IV. Manner, Agent, Instrument

The baby tried to talk because of me.
 The girl cried because of her loneliness.
 The stew was made by the children.
 The children walked in line.
 The girl talked like her mother.
 The boy practiced batting under a good coach.
 The baby said hello with a smile.

V. Measure, Number, Amount

As many as ten children can go at one time.
As much as one quart of juice is needed by the children.

Much prepositional usage in this area is highly conventionalized and idiomatic. A traditional grammarian would question "one of" or "as many as" etc. as prepositions and perhaps rightly so because they do inject a semantic content not consistent with the rigid definition. It may serve a teaching purpose to view these expressions as prepositions, however,

and for that reason they are listed as such.

There are about ten children in the game.

We need as much as a quart.

We can use as many as ten marbles.

I can count by fives.

The boys will take five marbles from the pile.

The boys will take five marbles away from the pile.

Can you take five from ten?

Can you take five away from ten?

We can cut the candy in half.

We can cut the candy in two pieces.

We can break the cookie in two.

One of you can help me.

Many of you have been to the park.

The runners are on the mark.

The water is on the line.

The water is over the line.

We'll add this paper to the pile.

Let's buy a present under one dollar.

Can you save up to one dollar?

VI. Miscellaneous

This category includes many idiomatic expressions that defy logical explanation and though they should certainly be used with and modeled for children, appositive definition may be helpful. For example, the teacher may say, "That's about it." The teacher could say, "That's about it, I mean we have nearly finished our work."

That's about it.

After all you are very tired.

We mustn't beat around the bush.

The baby's cheeks are as pink as roses.

Everyone but John went.

It's all right by me.

This work is really good for you.

I am for the other team.

They are in love.

Look into the matter.

Can you read the last line of the poem?

The music is off beat.

Would you be on my side.

He threw the ball out of turn.

She talked over my head.

He is really dear to my heart.

He worked under great difficulty.

It's up to you.

I see a child with red hair.

I am giving it to you with my love.

The Potential of Conjunctive Usage
in the Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary List
of 220 Words

The conjunctives, according to John Carroll are a linguistic manifestation of a class of experiences that include,

Logical relations occurring whenever any two or more members of any class or construction are considered together.³

This suggests that in using conjunctives a speaker is simultaneously holding in mind two or more concepts or two or more whole ideas in a relationship that is logical. "Logical" deserves a definition and the etymology of the word may be a helpful way to decipher its implication. "Logical" is derived from the Greek "logikos" which means "belonging to speaking or reason" which, in turn was derived from "logos" meaning "word or reason" which came from "legein" meaning "to say." So it is evident that the way we verbalize relationships has a base in "reason" if it is logical." Meriam-Webster⁷ says it is logical if it is in accordance with inferences reasonably drawn from event and circumstances. The use of the conjunction is restricted or limited more than is the preposition because it relates only words of the same form class or only structures that are the same.

The author is defining conjunctive in its broadest functional sense, inclusive therefore of relative pronoun, adverbial subordinators and adjectival subordinators of clauses. They serve as reconstructors³, taking one item of knowledge and so reorganizing it via its inherent logic that it can be related linguistically to another item of knowledge.

The nature of the logic of any relating of similar class words or grammatical structures is specified linguistically in the conjunctive. What kind of logic or relational thinking does the Dolch list (220 word list) suggest for children at the beginning level of school? Let us take a look at the listed conjunctives and their logical implications. Only the underlined words have solely a conjunctive service. The others may also be used as prepositions or adverbs or pronouns.

after	before	<u>or</u>	when
<u>and</u>	<u>but</u>	so	where
as	how	that	which
<u>because</u>	if	what	who
			why

The following categories of logical relationships should be noted:

I. Temporal Relationships

A. Sequence (relating clauses)

After we paint, we'll read a story.
 We'll paint before we write a story.
When you finish the story, we can play outside.
 We'll mail the letter when it is written.
 We'll not go until you are ready.

B. Anticipation of future (relating clauses)

We'll wait until you are ready.
 We'll go after you have eaten.

C. Duration (relating clauses)

We wear warm clothes when it's cold.
 She laughed as she played.

II. Conditionality (relating clauses)

If you eat your cereal, you can go out and play.
 You could fly like a bee if you were a bee.

III. A. Additive relating or grouping of items, characteristics, actions, or ideas

(Relates nouns)	The tree <u>and</u> the house are green.
(Relates nouns)	The boy <u>and</u> girl play together.
(Relates adjectives)	The dress is green <u>and</u> white.
(Relates verbs)	They play <u>and</u> talk together.
(Relates clauses)	John plays ball, <u>and</u> Jane plays house.
(Relates adverbs)	The plane flew up <u>and</u> over.

B. Continuation

(Relating nouns)	The boy, the girl, <u>and</u> the dog ran.
(Relating clauses)	Each day I set the table, serve the meal, <u>and</u> wash the dishes.

IV. Choosing Alternatives

(Relating nouns)	Do you want an apple <u>or</u> an orange?
(Relating nouns)	Do you want candy, coke, <u>or</u> pie?
(Relating predicates)	I'll paint the picture <u>or</u> write a story.
(Relating verbs)	I can write <u>or</u> tell the story.

(Relating adverbs)
 (Relating clauses)
 (Relating adjectives)

Shall we do it now or later?
 You can clean the table, or you
 can wash the dishes.
 I want the big or the pretty box.

V. Exceptionality

(Relating nouns)

Everyone but John has gone to the
 park.

VI. Contradiction

(Relating adjectives)
 (Relating adverbs)
 (Relating clauses)

John is short but strong.
 Mary plays alone but happily.
 John will go to the park, but we
 cannot go to the pool.

VII. Manner

(Relating clauses)

I wonder how she will fix the broken
 box.

VIII. Similarity (relating clauses)

(Substandard but frequent)

I want to read like you read.
 I want to read as well as you do.

IX. Causality (relating clauses)

A. Agent of effect

The kite flies because the wind moves it.
Because the wind moves the kite, it flies.
John hurt his foot so he can't walk.
 He asked why the kite flew high.

B. Condition of effect

The kite flies if the wind moves it.
If the wind moves the kite, it flies.

C. Concomitant of effect

The kite flies when the wind moves it.
When the wind moves the kite, it flies.

D. Arranging for effect, setting the stage, purpose

Let's be quiet so he can sleep.
 The rope was hung so the kids could swing on it.

- X. Memory (keeping one fragment of thought in mind while relating it to a second thought). Therefore, "who" and "that", relative pronouns, also fill the conjunctive role.

For example:

I know the girl who is in the red dress.

I know the girl that you met. (Substandard)

I ate the cake that you made.

- XI. Tentativeness, inferred possibility

He read the story as if he knew the people.

He cried as if he were sick.

Some Prepositional Possibilities
Drawn from the Dolch 220 Word List

Prepositional		Prepositions, prepositional phrases		Relations of spatial temporal or logical position relative to nominals	
Place & Position	Direction & Motion	Time	Manner Agent Instrument	Measure Number Amount (idiom)	Misc.
about	about	about	-----	about	about
after	after	after	-----	-----	after
around	around	around	-----	-----	around
-----	-----	as	-----	-----	as
at	at	at	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----	because of	-----	-----
before	-----	before	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	but
by	-----	by	by	by	by
-----	down	-----	-----	-----	-----
-----	from	from	-----	from	-----
in	in	in about in	-----	in half in two, etc.	-----
-----	into	into	-----	-----	into
-----	-----	-----	like	-----	like
-----	-----	-----	-----	one of two of a few of most of many of	of
off	off off of	off	-----	-----	off
on	-----	on	-----	on	on
out of	out out of	-----	-----	-----	out of
over	over	over	-----	over	over
-----	to	to	-----	to	to
under	under	under	under	under	under
-----	-----	-----	with	-----	with

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